

Lessons on death  
and life in "tuesdays  
with morrie" by mitch  
albom report



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The book "Tuesdays with Morrie" is about the lessons the author (Mitch Albom) learnt from a former College teacher, coach and friend-Morrie Schwartz on death and life. Essentially, the book starts with a brief history on Morrie's life before the illness and his reaction after the diagnosis. Readers learn that Morrie opted not to throw in the towel but continued with these classroom activities until his body could not allow him to do so. Mitch Albom then gives a brief summary of his interactions with Morrie in College.

Eventually, we learn about the first time Mitch sees Morrie on TV after decades of losing touch and this is the ice breaker that brings these two individuals together. The rest of the book essentially delves into the lessons on life that Morrie gets from his dying mentor. It is called Tuesdays with Morrie because that is the day when they meet every week. In these lessons, Morrie clarifies the most important aspects of life and affirms that one needs to be bold enough to focus on these things.

To the protagonist, living life in the moment and then detaching oneself from those moments is a sure way to get the most out of it. Furthermore, he asserts that when one focuses on giving rather than taking then one can find purpose. To him, it is the little things that matter the most as seen through his description of what a perfect day is. He also stresses the importance of family and love as these are essential foundations that can get one through the hardest and most difficult times.

When I started this remarkable book, I expected to get insights on death and the end of life (although I was able to get these) the most profound aspect about the book was its teaching on life and living. It has lessons for almost

every single aspect of life that one faces i. e. school, marriage, careers, money, society and most importantly life's misfortunes. It taught me how to get the best out of life rather than focus on a frantic rat race.

The book was so profound to me because it was not a work of fiction; these were all assertions made by a real human being. Morrie Schwartz did indeed fall victim to the unforgiving illness - Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) and all the advice he gave was personal and genuine. I could connect with every emotion, every struggle and every loss. To me, the author did a splendid job by capturing all of Morrie's assertions in a book that has been distributed to the rest of world.

There is no doubt that what Morrie shared with the author is relevant in any person's life and it can therefore make another's life richer and better. This book has definitely changed my life. I keep referring to it from time to time and will read little bits of it just so that I can be reminded about the richness and wealth of living. I never take things for granted now.

".. the idea of quitting did not occur to Morrie." (Albom, 9)

This quote comes at a time in the novel when Professor Morrie has been diagnosed with the illness and is slowly losing some of the most treasured aspects of his existence such as privacy, the ability walk and independence. At this point, any person would have decided to just go home and retire. However, Morrie's tenacity is quite amazing because he chooses to continue teaching even in this painful and difficult circumstance. To me, this illustrates that even though life may seem harder than usual, one must not throw in the towel so easily.

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“ After the funeral, my life changed, I felt as if time were suddenly precious..”(Albom, 15)

Here, the author is talking about one of the earliest experiences he had with death. His most favorite relative i. e. his uncle lost his life to pancreatic cancer. He watched as the latter struggled with the ailment. What hurt him the most was that this uncle was the one who he looked up to as a young life. He was also the same person who taught him the little things in life like football, driving and women. It was therefore understandable if the death of such an important person took a heavy toll on Mitch.

He reacted to this by changing his behavior and chasing after accomplishments. I felt that this reaction is something common to anyone who goes through a sudden negative occurrence in one's life. Because the shock and the pain are often too much, many people will avoid that pain by looking for outlets. Conversely, some may believe that by doing things differently, they can shield or somehow stop a similar shocking experiences in the future. I believe Mitch experienced a change in attitude because he was engaging in this frantic endeavor.

“ Am I going to withdraw from life.. or am I going to live?” (Albom, 21)

Here, Morrie is in a TV interview when he was talking about the end of life. I was really struck by this statement because I realized that one must make a conscious decision to engage in life. It is this conscious decision that can assist an individual to make the most of one's circumstances as Morrie did.

“ There’s a big confusion in this country over what we want and what we need” (Albom, 126)

This was another profound statement uttered by Morrie when discussing the American culture with this former student. I was moved by this sentence because it occurred to me that whenever things appear to be going wrong; this is always a sign of a deeper problem underneath. People often error in terms of first principles because they misunderstand something. In this case, individuals in the US have forgotten the importance of needs and are now merely focusing on wants.

“ Yes, after all, I get to be a baby one more time” (Albom, 49)

Here, Morrie was talking about becoming so sick that he cannot carry out normal toilet hygiene on his own and he would have to rely on another person to assist him in that task. This seemed like a very disturbing thought but what struck me was the immense positivity that Morrie had. Instead of throwing his hands up, he chooses to look at one of the most embarrassing situations in his life positively. This just showed me that if one tries hard enough, one can always find something good about a situation.

“ Am on the last great journey here and people want me to tell them what to pack” (Albom, 33)

As I read the book, I realized how interdependent humans are towards each other and this quote captures that essence quite well. Man is essentially uncertain about various elements about his life and is always on the lookout for some guidance. In other words, members of the society need each other.

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However, when one looks at this keenly, one can also see an element of self interest here. Individuals often shower praises upon others calling them courageous and outstanding as they did with Morrie. But underneath those praises is a self seeking agenda from the concerned parties because they just want to get something that will help them.

“ People were so hungry for love they were accepting substitutes” (Albom, 125)

The author has managed to put a serious context on the material culture that has taken over this society through this quote. It is often difficult to associate the frantic chase for material things with emotional matters. It is not that people who chase after material wealth do not need emotional satisfaction or love; it is simply that they are actually so desperate for it. Furthermore, one can see that a profound misunderstanding has occurred in terms of how to fill this void.

“ This is how you get respect; by offering something you have.” (Albom, 127)

Society is always trying to demystify life's purpose and they do this by trying to unlock the secret of happiness. Morrie is able to throw some light on this matter by asserting that this is all about give and take. When one can make a change in someone else's life, then that automatically adds meaning. Essentially, the book shows why looking for money cannot add meaning to life. Instead of giving to one's community, the search for money only takes it away; no wonder so many people are still miserable in their wealth.

“ ... Then I'd like to go for a walk in a garden with some trees..” (Albom, 176)

Morrie was describing his perfect day if he was able to recover all his senses and all the other things that made him normal. Instead of making these insane wishes about visiting the Bahamas, Morrie's idea of a perfect day was a walk in the park, visiting friends and the like. Although these might appear like very simple things, yet it is those things that actually add meaning to life. Through the book, one can learn that treasuring those moments and finding perfection in every single thing one does is the key to contentment.

" Here's what I mean by building your subculture...but these things; those you , must choose for yourself" (Albom, 155)

This book illustrates how we need not accept everything our society presents to us as acceptable. Although society advocates for a material culture, one has the right to reject this because it clearly has a lot of flaws. This is book is therefore empowering because it shows people the freedom they have to curve out their own identities by choosing the right values.

Albom, M. Tuesdays with Morrie. NY: Random house publishers